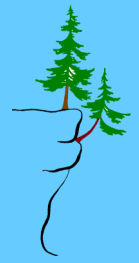


Kickapoo Valley Reserve UPDATE



Spring 2021

A quarterly publication highlighting education, property management & events on the KVR

On April 5th, 2021 the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center officially re-opened its doors to the public. Current hours are Monday - Saturday 8am-4:30pm (beginning the week of April 26th); masks and distancing required. We encourage users to continue to purchase their day permits and annual passes online: <https://kvronline.wi.gov/KVRProducts.aspx>

However, camping must be paid for at a self-pay station or at the Visitor Center during office hours due to first come, first served.



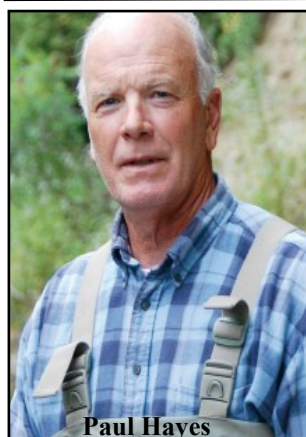
Property Manager Jason Leis removing Visitor Center closed sign in place since last summer.

We **sincerely thank everyone** for their support and patience over the past year. We couldn't be happier to welcome folks back! ❤️

No April Fool's joke, April 1st, KVR Director Marcy West made the announcement that she will be resigning as Executive Director of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. West has been the property's only executive director and served in the position for over 24 years. She will leave behind a legacy that the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board, staff, Friends of KVR, and community of people will continue to strive to uphold. West helped to establish the 8,600 acres with the Mission "The land in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve shall be protected, preserved, and enhanced..." It is not often that an individual as bright, talented, and committed as she is comes along. If you would like to send a gift in her honor, please consider a donation to the KVR Enhanced Discovery Center campaign. All donations will be matched 1:2 until we reach our goal of \$600,000. For every \$2.00 donated the Prairie Springs: The Paul Fleckenstein Trust will donate \$1.00. Also, please feel free to write or email messages to kickapoo.reserve@krm.state.wi.us or mail to KVR, S3661 State Hwy 131, La Farge, WI 54639 and we'll be sure to pass them along to her. **Position Description and application for Executive Director can be found by visiting the State of Wisconsin [job posting site](#). Deadline to apply is May 3rd, 2021.**



Marcy West



Paul Hayes

Longtime watershed resident Paul Hayes steps down after nearly a decade on the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board (KRMB). Hayes was appointed to the KRMB in 2012, and he brought 43 years of experience as a high school science teacher. Hayes knowledge and dedication have been a true asset to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. In his time as a KRMB member Paul helped plan, execute and secure funding for the Weister Creek restoration project.

continued on page 6

What's Happening on the KVR

- April 24 - Driftless Dialogue: Habitat Improvements 10-11am**
- May 1 - KVR Equestrian & Bike Trails Open (weather permitting)**
- May 6 - Education & Tourism Committee MTG 6:30pm**
- May 8 - Driftless Dialogue: Spring Ephemerals 10-11am**
- May 11 - Land Management Committee MTG 5:30pm**
- May 15 - Driftless Dialogue: Birding 10-11am**
- May 20 - KRMB MTG 7:00pm**
- May 22 - Driftless Dialogue: Dam History 10-11am**
- June 5 - National Trails Day - Stay tuned for more details!**
- June 12 - Driftless Dialogue: Invasive Plants - Identification & Management 10-11am**
- June 26 - Driftless Dialogue: Riparian Forests, Stream Restoration, and Persistent Flooding in the Kickapoo Valley 10-11am**
- July 9 & 10 - Friends of KVR Garden Walk Tour**



More details?
kickapoovalley.wi.gov



Camping at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve

Primitive camping is available at 26 sites identified on the visitor guide map. About half of the sites are vehicle-accessible for \$15/night; about one third are canoe-accessible and about one third are hike-in, bike-in, or horseback-accessible only for \$10/night. **Campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis.** You will not know if someone is at the site until you physically drive or walk up to it. KVR busy season runs from May-October, especially weekends. If being guaranteed a site is a concern, Wildcat Mountain State Park offers reservations. There is also camping at the Village of La Farge campground (first come, first served). **All campers are required to register and obtain camping permits;** camping permits are available at the 16 self-registration stations located throughout the Reserve. Sites do not have water or toilet facilities. Potable water and bathrooms are available at the Visitor Center near the parking lot and Village of La Farge Campground. Plan appropriately.

Reminder that campsites were re-located out of the floodplain in the spring of 2020. Please make sure you are referencing a [current map](#). Camping in a non-designated site is \$150 fine.



- Step 1:** Set up/claim a vacant site
- Step 2:** Go to iron ranger/self registration station (green dot on map)
- Step 3:** Lift lid and complete form; put one copy in envelope with payment (cash or check) and put in slot.
- Step 4:** Display copy on your dash so it is easily seen.



Driftless Dialogue Hike Series at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve

We are doing an all outdoor lecture series this spring! Each talk/hike begins at 10am and lasts approximately one hour. Guests will be walking and/or standing most of the hour, so please plan accordingly. All talk/hikes are free and open to the public thanks to a generous grant from the Kickapoo Valley Reforestation (Nuzum) Fund.

Registration for each talk/hike is required. Please call the Visitors Center 608-625-2960 or email kickapoo.reserve@krm.state.wi.us and let us know if you plan to attend and how many people are in your group. Each hike is capped at 20 people. Talk/hikes are recorded and uploaded to the KVR website and air on the local community channel. A complete schedule and talk/hike descriptions can be found on our website: kickapoovalley.wi.gov/Events/Lecture-Series/



The Ralph Nuzum Lecture Series is free thanks to a grant by the Ralph E Nuzum Kickapoo Reforestation Fund through the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and the Friends of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.



2021 Annual Passes are available [online](#). (valid until December 31, 2021)

Purchase or renew your 2021 Annual Pass (passes will be mailed to you). Permits are required for the various visitor uses at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Activities such as hiking, biking and horseback riding require a day use or annual permit. Camping on the Reserve requires a separate permit. All vehicles parked at river access sites must display a day use, annual, camping, or vehicle parking permit. **All fee revenue is used to maintain, improve and protect the Reserve!**

KVR Education Program Update: Kickapoo Valley Forest School Progress Continues

While things were quiet this winter, the KVR Education staff was hard at work helping to develop, plan and grow the newest Education endeavor at the KVR. The Kickapoo Valley Forest School (KVFS) now has a full roster of students ready to join us this fall and planning is well underway. If you haven't yet heard or read about this exciting new partnership with the La Farge School District check out KVFS's website here:

<https://www.kickapoovalleyforestschool.org/>

And, in order to serve KVFS and the growing Education Programs at the KVR, a new stand-alone classroom space will be built on the KVR this coming summer, just south of the Visitor Center deck near the walking trail. This new classroom design is inspired by super insulated passive solar structures that will take minimal energy to heat and cool. This effort has been made possible by an all-volunteer team that has dedicated hundreds of hours to planning, designing, and sourcing materials and funds for this project. This volunteer effort will continue into the building phase. Here's where you come in! If you have experience with building projects, and a comfort level around the tools needed to construct a simple building, we are looking for volunteers to join our work crews that will be headed by an experienced project manager as the building goes up this summer. Whether you have just a few hours or several days to give we would appreciate hearing from you. Please contact Julie Hoel, Building Project Volunteer Coordinator at:

julievhoel@icloud.com We truly appreciate

your time, and these volunteer efforts represent the best of the KVR community spirit!

Many Thanks! The materials and site preparation for this new building were made possible by a generous \$100K donation from Prairie Springs: The Paul Fleckenstein Trust. Local donors, Chuck & Gwen Hatfield, Brad & Carolyn Steinmetz, Gil & Julie Hoel and an anonymous donor kick-started the campaign with a combined \$22K pledge.

SUMMER CAMP AT KVR!

Spring is here and with it the invitation to embrace warm weather and get outside to learn and explore. That's just what students and campers at the KVR will be doing this spring and summer! Spring school groups will be welcomed back to KVR this year in smaller numbers than usual as we roll out our COVID safety protocol and schools slowly begin to allow field trips again. Summer camps however are in full swing, with plans for camps to be conducted almost entirely outside with lots of easy-to-observe safety protocol like ventilation (!) and masks and distancing when necessary. We know that the risk of COVID transmission is greatly reduced outdoors so we'll embrace that factor and once again explore the valleys, ponds, creeks, and forests of the KVR together. For more information about camps or to register:

<http://kvr.state.wi.us/Education/Summer-Camp>



**Don't forget to check out the KVR
Education blog:**

<https://kvrlearningoutside.blogspot.com/>

Here you'll find articles by KVR staff, instructors and volunteers on anything from ideas for playing in the mud, to spring wildflowers and invasive species. Beautiful photos and relevant information about all things KVR can be found here biweekly, so check it out!



What's happening along the Old Hwy 131 Trail?

You may have noticed last fall trees being removed from the west side of the river across from the Old Hwy 131 trail near Bridge 16. The project is focused on flood resiliency more than anything else. The Old 131 Trail blacktop in that area south of Bridge 16 is being undercut by the repetitive floods over the last few years. If this continues, we will lose a segment of trail with nowhere to move it to and no money to rebuild.



After thorough consultation with a variety of agencies, the plan is to stabilize the east side of the bank with rock rip-rap to protect the trail and blacktop. Removal of trees on the west side allows the river to reconnect with its historic floodplain



Excavator performing work to help stabilize the river bank

during high water. Taking some of the energy off and spreading the water out is how the Kickapoo should function. The trees capture sediment and made the bank higher over the years disconnecting it from the nearby wetland and forcing the water to impact the opposite bank more than it needed. We will monitor the project and hope to use it to demonstrate how we can work with the river rather than trying to control it. UW Madison and FEMA are also studying alternative practices in preparation for the next historic flood. Fortunately the KVR doesn't have private landowners adjacent to this site, so we can watch what the river does and learn from it.

The KVR has a robust management plan and sustainable timber harvests are a part of that plan. Harvests are done in part to help maintain and/or restore the diversity of species the Reserve is recognized for and the ecosystem depends on. In addition, old growth & designated Natural Areas are protected from harvest but will require long-term vigilance as invasives and new diseases are always a threat. It's a dynamic system out there, that's for sure.

If you would like to become more involved consider joining a subcommittee [Education & Tourism](#) (E&T) and/or [Land Management](#) (LM) by emailing jonel.kiesau@wisconsin.gov (E&T) or jason.leis@wisconsin.gov (LM). The public is welcome to attend our monthly KRMB meetings as well. Meetings are the 3rd Thursday of each month.

KVR Partnership for Dark Sky Designation

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve, Wildcat Mountain State Park, and Mississippi Valley Conservancy are excited to announce they are working together to designate the 13,300 acres of KVR, Wildcat, and Tunnelville Cliffs as Wisconsin's second International Dark Sky Park. The International Dark-Sky Association awards this distinction to "land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment." The application process requires a sky quality survey, lighting inventory and management plan, community partners, and education and outreach. They are assisted in this initiative by John Heasley and others, who hope to complete the process by 2022. Benefits of creating the Kickapoo Dark Sky Park include a healthier community and ecosystem, the financial benefits of tourism, the pride of being a world-leading community, and financial savings owing to reduced energy usage. But most important is preserving our heritage of starry skies for the enjoyment and awe of future generations.



Bridge 18

SUMMER, SUMMER, SUMMER!!!

Cannot imagine a summer we've all looked forward to more. The Kickapoo Reserve Management Board and staff have set an ambitious agenda for the 2021 season.

Here's what you can expect:

- ✓ The Visitor Center has reopened to the public with Covid-prevention measures in place; on-line permits will continue to be available as well as the self-registration stations throughout the KVR.
- ✓ Reconstruction of a portion of the Hay Valley Trail which has been closed since 2018 due to flood damage will begin as soon as conditions allow.
- ✓ Ongoing efforts to control invasive species. If you get excited about spring ephemerals and prairies in bloom but not equally frustrated by invasive plants impacting habitat diversity, we'd be happy to discuss.
- ✓ Natural surface trails will reopen May 1st if conditions allow.
- ✓ Construction will begin on a 500 square foot building just south of the Visitor Center in support of the ever-expanding Education Program.
- ✓ Innovative efforts to educate visitors on the unique features and protections of the 8,600-acre property. Many people utilized public spaces to get through the pandemic and we're glad they did. We just need to make sure they understand the rules in place to protect the KVR as well: Leave no Trace/Pack-it-in, Pack-it-Out; designated trails and campsites; trail closures due to wet weather and, being safe on the river and land.

We look forward to seeing you!



Chimney Swifts

by Ben Johnston

Spring 2021

When I think of all the possible ways to court a romantic interest, ice cream is an excellent option. Even if you fail or things don't work out, at least there was ice cream. Completely fail proof. Even if the date selects something repulsive like raspberry mint chocolate chip, or coconut eggnog swirl; you can still get your own favorite. Not to embarrass anyone, but a friend once told me that for dates with his best gal, they would go to the ice cream shop, get their favorite, and sit on the outside patio and watch the chimney swifts swarm the large brick chimney across the street. Romance at its finest.



Babies waiting for food
Photo by Jack Bartholmai

When one considers the [3 billion birds](#) lost since 1970s, the so-called aerial insectivores have suffered a 32% decline. Chimney swifts are one of these aerial insectivore species that has been suffering population loss. They are fast moving ("swift"), chattery, gray-

brown birds with curved wings. Tails are described as stubby. Some folks refer to them as flying cigars. (Editor's Note: the author thinks such an analogy is silly but will admit it can help with identification).

A few Fun Facts from [All About Birds](#):

- The species do not roost or perch like other birds. They can and will cling to vertical surfaces but sit on branch? NEVER.
- They feed on (insects) and drink (skimming water) while in flight (aerial). They gather nesting materials by breaking twigs with their feet while in flight.
- Nesting material (twigs) are held together by sticky glue-like saliva... from their own mouth.
- Only one nest per chimney, however other individuals may roost in the chimney as well. Possible two broods, 3-5 eggs.
- Adults feed young Primo Chimney Swift Formula.....a saliva saturated wad of insects. Buy yours online today.

Before the invention of chimneys, the swifts were called hollow tree and/or rock cavity swifts. As the old growth forests were lost to development and human expansion, the swifts began using chimneys for roosts. Or perhaps the chimneys simply provided an alternative roost option; regardless, the occurrence of the chimney boom of the 1700-1800s apparently boosted or promoted the population. Since the 1970s, their decline has been noted, and has been attributed to...ready for this....wait for it....here it comes....habitat loss.

continued on page 6

Watershed Resident Paul Hayes

continued from page 1

The restoration project was supported by Trout Unlimited, an organization that Hayes has been a member with since 1970. Hayes worked to have the KVR recognized an Important Bird Area by the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, Bird Life International, and National



Senator Pfaff and Representative Oldenburg present Paul Hayes with recognition of service plaque at April KRMB meeting.

Audubon Society. He played an integral part in the pheasant release program and was a Master Naturalist Instructor at the KVR, as well as spending many hours on prairie restoration and woodland work to preserve his own property, and stream monitoring with his wife Bernadette. The “river keepers” have been dedicated members to Vernon County and deserve our gratitude.

How you can make an impact!

There are many volunteer opportunities at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Complete the updated survey [on our website](#) for the 2021 season and the staff member(s) will contact you accordingly. We look forward to working with you!

Chimney Swifts *continued from page 5*

“Folks just ain’t building chimneys no more” says Dr. N.O. Body a fictitious chimney swift expert. “Existing chimneys are being capped or torn down.” As such, the removal of chimneys is apparently having an impact. In addition to loss of chimneys, insect population declines may also be a factor, but that is a story for another day, I reckon.

There are several support groups for people who wish to promote chimney swifts. In Wisconsin we have the Wisconsin Chimney Swift Working Group (wisswifts.org). Probably not the catchiest name, but their intent is clear. The group includes “professionals” from the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory, WI DNR, Audubon, WSO, others as well as citizens.

ChimneySwifts.org is another Chimney Swift Group.

So-called chimney swift towers are wooden or masonry structures designed to trick chimney swifts into thinking the object is a real chimney. Such artificial roosts have been successful in some areas, primarily in southern states. Plans call for insulation board to reduce internal temperatures from solar heat and placed on metal legs treated with “insect trap” substances to minimize the impacts of fire ants. Sometimes these towers are built in a backyard, others are in parks with informational materials plastered on attached kiosks.

Success of such towers in Wisconsin are questionable and I believe relatively unknown. The Wisconsin Chimney Swift Working Group suggest the possible need for supplemental heating sources may be required for the cool Wisconsin nights. A deterrent for fire ants might not be applicable this far north (at least not yet).

I have heard that a substantial population of chimney swifts use the Vernon County Historical Society building’s chimney in Viroqua. Not too familiar with the site myself, but to my understanding the Historical Society is housed in the former hospital and has one of those “old school” brick chimneys; look for it on the south side of town, near the current hospital. Rumor has it, towards dusk, one can watch the birds gather and swirl around the chimney, then one by one drop into the chimney for the night. This phenomenon might be best observed in late summer, prior to Chimney Swifts’ migration to South America.

The Vernon County Historical Society (VCHS) recently received a grant to make repairs to their chimney through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As with many such awards, matching funds are required. Donations are currently being accepted at VCHS, please make a note for the “Chimney Swifts”.

